

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

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NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-03 DRC-01

AID-20 AGR-20 /106 W

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R 040721Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3655

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 11703

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EGEN, IN

SUBJECT: INDIAN PRESS ON INDIAN REQUEST FOR FOOD AID FROM US

1. THE HINDUSTAN TIMES, THE TIMES OF INDIA, AND THE STATESMAN TODAY CARRY BY-LINED ARTICLES DATED SEPTEMBER 3 FROM WASHINGTON ON THE STATUS OF INDIA'S EFFORTS TO OBTAIN CONCESSIONARY FOOD AID FROM THE UNITED STATES. WARREN UNNA, WRITING IN THE STATESMAN, SAID THAT " THE INDIAN EMBASSY MADE INQUIRIES OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT AS RECENTLY AS A WEEK AGO. BUT BOTH THE EMBASSY AND THE STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS ARE PLAYING COY ON WHAT REALLY WAS REQUESTED. THE NEW YORK TIMES' NEW DELHI CORRESPONDENT REPORTED TODAY THAT THE EMBASSY HAD ASKED FOR ONE MILLION TONS OF GRAIN ON CONCESSIONAL TERMS". UNNA CONTINUES THAT " THE STATE DEPARTMENT, AFTER MUCH DIPLOMATIC CONFERRING OVER THE REPORT, DECIDED TO FUZZ THE ISSUE. AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT DECLARES "THE INDIAN EMBASSY HAS INQUIRED OF US ABOUT FOOD CONTRIBUTION THE USA MIGHT MAKE IN RESPONSE TO THE SPECIAL U.N. GENERAL ASSEMBLY APPEAL FOR THE MOST SERIOUSLY AFFECTED COUNTRIES IN THE CURRENT RESOURCE CRISIS. AND IN THAT CONTEXT, IT HAS ALSO DESCRIBED TO US INDIA'S OVERALL REQUIREMENTS." UNNA COMMENTS THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT REFUSES TO GET INTO TONNAGE BUT THAT IT ACKNOWLEDGED THAT " IT IS LOOKING INTO THE FOOD SITUATION IN INDIA", AS WELL AS OTHER

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COUNTRIES WHICH HAVE FOOD PROBLEMS, WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF OUR

OWN CROP AVAILABILITIES." UNNA ATTRIBUTES THIS "GOBBLEDEEGOOK" TO INTENSE PRESSURE FROM INDIA TO KEEP THE MATTER QUIET. UNNA QUOTES AN UNNAMED AID OFFICIAL AS SAYING "MEETING ANY AMOUNT FOR INDIA IS GOING TO TAKE A LOT OF EFFORT. I DON'T THINK ANYONE SHOULD BE SANGUINE THAT JUST BECAUSE THEY ASK FOR IT THEY ARE GOING TO GET IT". FULL TEXT OF THE UNNA ARTICLE SENT TO NEA/P.

2. M.V. KAMATH, WRITING IN THE TIMES OF INDIA ALSO CITES EXTENSIVELY THE WEINRAUB ARTICLE IN THE NEW YORK TIMES, AND ADDS " THE US EMBASSY IN DELHI APPARENTLY HAS TOLD THE STATE DEPARTMENT IN RECENT WEEKS THAT THE FOOD SITUATION IN INDIA IS DESPERATE AND THAT WIDESPREAD HUNGER AND EVEN FAMINE IS THREATENING THE NATION". KAMATH SAYS THAT INDIAN EMBASSY OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON " ARE STICKING TO THE STRICK GOVERNMENT POSITION THAT WHATEVER FOODGRAINS IS (SIC) NECESSARY IS BEING PURCHASED". HE CONCLUDES WITH A NOTE OF URGENCY THAT WASHINGTON WILL HAVE TO MAKE A POLITICAL DECISION FAST IF INDIA IS TO HAVE A SHARE OF THE AVAILABLE SURPLUS AND THAT INDIA, FOR ITS PART, MUST MAKE A SWIFT" POLITICAL DECISION" TO ASK FOR AID AND SET HER REQUEST BOLDLY IF SHE IS NOT TO BE LEFT BEHIND IN THE STAKES."

3. KRISHAN BHATIA IN THE HINDUSTAN TIMES ALSO BASES HIS STORY ON THE WEINRAUB ARTICLE, THE FACTUALITY OF WHICH HE SAID HAD BEEN "EMPHATICALLY DENIED" BY THE INDIAN EMBASSY. " WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE TIMES DESPATCH, INDIAN AMBASSADOR T.N. KAUL WAS FIRM IN HIS DENIAL OF IT. HE SAID THAT NO REQUEST, PUBLIC OR PRIVATE, HAD BEEN CONVEYED TO THE ADMINISTRATION FOR FOOD ASSISTANCE. NEW DELHI'S POSITION WAS THAT IT WAS THE US WHICH HAD TERMINATED AID TO INDIA THREE YEARS AGO AND IT WAS FOR THE ADMINISTRATION TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT IT WANTED TO END THAT SITUATION, MR. KAUL SAID."

4. THE ULTRA NATIONLIST AND LITTLE READ MOTHERLAND ALSO CARRIED AN ARTICLE FROM WASHINGTON POST BASED ON A PRESS TRUST OF INDIA DESPATCH. THE ARTICLE CITES A REPORT IN THE WASHINGTON POST OF SEPTEMBER 2 THAT THE UNITED STATES WILL BE UNABLE TO PROVIDE ANY SUBSTANTIAL QUANTITIES OF FOOD SUPPLIES EVEN IF INDIA ASKS.

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5. WE WILL REPORT ANY EDITORIAL COMMENT THESE ARTICLES GENERATE.MOYNIHAN

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